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The Towering Inferno

By Stirling Silliphant

So, how was it? Good. You're gonna go ahead, huh? Full steam. Anything I can do to change your mind? Nope. No way. You know, there's an old saying that, uh, no matter how hot it gets up there during the day, there's not... Not a damn thing to do at night. That's right. Now just what the hell are you gonna do at night in the middle of nowhere? Sleep like a winner. Doug, you're a city boy with a low threshold of boredom. You'll be back in two weeks. Can you come in the office for a minute? I got people waiting upstairs. Well, what I wanted to tell you is that, uh, Senator Parker's flying in for the dedication tonight, and he's almost guaranteed the urban renewal contract. Now, do you know what that means? Skyscrapers like this all over the country. You design 'em, I'll build 'em. Jim, I think you suffer from an "edifice" complex. You'll never leave. Right after the party, come on downstairs and watch me burn my black tie. Glad to see you back. Sam. It's Doug. How are ya? Doug, I can't understand it. The dampers won't stay open. Dampers? Whatever happened to hello? Hello. How are ya? Good. You look like it took. Yeah. Hi, Mr. Roberts. Hey, Doug. Just a second. We're gonna miss you. Duncan know? He's all smiles. Mm-hmm. Hey. What electromagnets went in? Doug. Thompson G-4's. Shouldn't they have been, like, G-12's? Oh, no. That's what comes from this damn last-minute panic. I'll fix it, Doug. Okay. What? We keep running into groundwater on that Atlanta job. Bring the designs in sometime this afternoon. Good to see you back, but how about Chicago specs? Philadelphia. In a minute, guys. Well, hello. Welcome back. Are you taking any calls? Well, is there- Mm-hmm. No, I'm not taking any calls. We gonna talk at all? No. It's my lunch hour. Mmm. Well, I'm not a cheeseburger, you know. You're better. All protein. No bread. All I need to go with you is about eight glasses of water. All I need to go with you is in that suitcase over there. What's in that suitcase? I got about 140 dollars' worth of vulgar underwear for ya. First things first. It's nice. Years from now, when they talk about this- and they will- remember to tell them that it was my idea. Right. Got change for a 50? - I'm sorry. That's the smallest I have. - Oh, not a chance. Let's see what we got here. Oh. Uh, That's it exactly. Catch your tip next time. Hello, Mrs. Allbright. Hi, Phillip. We won't be so messy tomorrow. Tomorrow we're gonna try charcoals. Mommy wants to know if you'll have dinner with us tonight. Oh, thank you, but I'm going up to the party in the tower. Aren't you coming? Mommy says thanks, but she doesn't go to parties since Daddy died. Oh, here. Let me take that paint off. Bye. How are you, Phillip? Sorry, Mrs. Mueller. What was that? I said, "How are you?" Okay. Good-bye. Okay. I'll get on it right now. I'll have to check the panel. Just leave all those fired up. Mr. Callahan. Yeah. We still got any of those G-12 electrodes in stock? Yeah. Main storeroom. Right. Okay. Booster pump, Zone 1. Check. Main generator, Zone 1. I don't get any reading. Try the auxiliary generator. What the hell? Go ahead. Ah. Here we are. Are there offices on this floor as well as apartments? Oh, I wouldn't like that

at all. Oh, no, no. The business offices only go as high as 80. From the 81st floor here, all the way up to 120, it's exclusively residential. Now, the apartment I want to show you is 8145. Say, Bill. Tune in the main utility room. Okay. Something's screwed up. The sensor didn't trip the fire department alarm. Why should it? You can see for yourself. There's no fire. Well, the sensor indicates there is. Plus Wes just called. He said they're having wiring problems down there. You better stay with it. I want you up there with me. We can do good things together. What's the matter? Hello. Dave's leaving. They've offered me managing editor. That's nice. I mean... I guess we got ourselves a situation. Seems. See, Doug, I want the kind of life you're talking about. I want that. And I want a place where our kids can run around and grow and be free. But? I want this job. I've wanted it for five years. I've worked for it for five years. Now suddenly it's there. See, I have... I have ideas, Doug. I can do something with it. Something that hasn't been done before. I guess I want both, and I can't have both, can I? I don't know. Yeah. Where? Be right there. Let's hold this off till tonight, hmm? What happened? We kicked on the auxiliary, and this shorted out. Power off? Yeah. What about that? It should've been conduit. Give me a pair of dikes. I know, I know. Callahan called me. Now, just how bad is it? Depends on how good your imagination is. Jesus Christ. The specs called for conduit safety covering. How many fuse terminals did you check? How many do I have to? Yeah. Mr. Bigelow is here, sir. Okay. Send him in. Now, Doug, one piece of scorched wire from a burned-out circuit breaker is hardly conclusive. Well, maybe not, but after that, I'm worried about what other shocks we're in for. Will. Doug. J.D., wait till you see this. What happened? Somebody hang the wallpaper upside down? We have an equipment problem. No problem in the tower, is there? Could be. Come on, Doug. You're just guessing. All right. I'm just guessing. But I want to talk to that son-in-law of yours. I want to talk to him right away. Okay. Get me Roger Simmons. Yes, sir. I'm gonna check this thing out, Mr. Duncan. I guarantee you. Sure, sure. We're all going to check it out. I'm missing something. We damn near had a fire. Yeah. A fire. In this building? Come on. Do you know we haven't even finished installing the safety equipment? The party should have been put off for at least another month. Now, hold it, Will. Hold it! Everybody's overreacting. Yes. Mr. Simmons is out, sir. - Out where? - They don't know, sir, but I left word for him to call. Okay. We'll talk to Roger tomorrow, and then we'll decide what to do. That's okay, isn't it? Nope. Won't wait. Try Zone 1 again. Damn it, Harry. This is top priority. We've got to get these electrical systems back on the beam. Our whole security program's loused up without 'em. Don't go away. Doug. Well, what a surprise. Where's that electrical genius of yours? I mean, I called his office, the club, the marina- everywhere. No luck. What's he done? Come on. I'll get you a drink. He must have done something, 'cause my father called. I haven't heard him that upset in years. You have any idea where he is?

Well, my husband's territory ranges rather widely. It's roughly equivalent to that of the timber wolf- anywhere within a 50-mile radius. But if you want to wait, he'll show up. He has to. His clothes are here. Can I get you a drink? No. No, thanks. I guess you don't plan to tell me what Roger's done. Hi, Doug. Honey. Hello. What are you drinking these days? Nothing right now. Well, welcome back from the wilderness. To what do we owe the pleasure? Callahan was testing a backup generator. There was a power surge and a systems failure. How can that be? Well, it can't be, theoretically. Unless you've been screwing around with the electrical specifications. That's being rather blunt, isn't it? You betcha. Then you'll understand my being equally blunt. What the hell business is it of yours anyway? Well, I'm just wondering what kind of kickbacks were involved. I don't have to take crap from you. Now, listen. We had an electrical flare-up in the main utility room. It looked to me like some of that wiring wasn't exactly what I asked for. Every piece of wire I put in that building is strictly up to code- inspected and approved. The code's not enough for that building. And you know it. That's why I asked for installations that were way, way above standard. Buddy, you live in a dreamworld. I deal in realities. I want your wiring diagrams and copies of your work orders. It'd take weeks to get all that together- and someone with more clout than you to make me do it. In my office, tomorrow, 9:00. They say he used to wrestle grizzly bears in Montana. Of course, he was younger then. Probably in better condition. You must have enjoyed all this immensely. No, I didn't. Actually, I'm depressed for both of us. What did you expect me to do? Punch him in the nose? Roger, if you've done anything to Dad's building, God help you. Baby, I don't need God's help. Or your old man's. Not anymore. So don't expect me to shake every time daddy barks. I mean, if that's what you want me to do. All I want is the man I thought I married. But I guess we're running out of reasons to stay married, aren't we? It's getting late. Mustn't miss the party. Stand back, please. All right. Give me a wide camera angle. Everybody, back of the rope. Stand back. Please. Everybody, back of the rope. Hi. I hope you like your men prompt. At my age... I only care that they show up at all. Oh, nonsense. Now, you be a good girl, Elke. I left you some milk in the kitchen. See you later. Did you find Simmons? Yeah, I found him. Well, did he or didn't he change your specs? He didn't admit it, but two bucks will get ya 10 he did. Payoffs and kickbacks. That's the only way he could've swung it. Well, here you are. Your original specs. Zone 1 only, but we gotta start somewhere. The son of a bitch gave us an impossible job. Susan. Hello, Danny. Good evening. Good show. How are you, dear? Jim. Congratulations. It's magnificent. Thank you. Uh, I'll meet you out front. I'd like to talk to Susan for a minute. Right. Find me the architect who designed you, and who needs Doug Roberts? I do. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a gala evening. The entire city is in a holiday mood. The list of luminaries tonight reads like a who's who. There are leaders

from society and government. Stars of screen and television. And now, just arriving, the honorable Gary Parker, chairman of the Federal Urban Renewal Commission. The senator flew in from Washington tonight to be here for the dedication. Senator Parker, ladies and gentlemen. We'll try to get him over to the microphone to say a few words for you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. I am honored to be here tonight. This magnificent building represents yet another landmark... in a long succession of landmarks for this great city. I think you've got him in the bag, Jim. I am deeply appreciative... of being here at this historic moment. Thank you. Thank you. And now, ladies and gentlemen, it's Mr. and Mrs. Roger Simmons. Mrs. Simmons is the daughter of the builder, Jim Duncan. How are you? Nice to see you, Senator. Shake hands with Mr. Duncan, please. Ah, yes. Where were you all day? I wasn't aware the leash was that tight. When I get the time, I want to ask you a few questions, and I expect some straight answers. And now, ladies and gentlemen, Mayor and Mrs. Robert Ramsay. I thank you very much. I hereby dedicate this magnificent glass tower... tallest building in the world. Oh! We'll make it. That's it. All right, Callahan? Hit them. Oh! This way. It's really something, isn't it? And you know, it's all... After you. This is really going to thrill you. Come on, Dan. I'm going by the office. I'll be up in a few minutes. Oh, that's incredible. I've never seen the bridge looking like that. Oh, it's absolutely unbelievable. It's astonishing! How did it go down there, Mr. Bigelow? Fine. Thank you. Good night. Good night. Shall I leave you a night line, Mr. Bigelow? Uh, you can disconnect. I've had it with phones for today. Good night. Good night. Lorrie. Yes. Sorry to break into your evening, but I have one letter that's got to go out. See you Monday, Janet. Good night, sir. Good night. Gee, I never thought he'd come back here before the party. You could have left and missed him. It's all right. I'm not going to do anything tonight. Oh. Hey. Have a nice weekend. Thanks. You too. Hello. Hi. Promise me something? What? If I ever start taking you for granted, do something about it. And what do you suggest? Cut off the phone lines. Mm-hmm. Pour coffee down my neck. Tweak my nose? Mmm. I promise. ' We may never love like this again ' ' Don't stop the flow ' ' We can't let go ' ' We may never love like this again ' ' And touch the sky ' ' Though we may try ' ' So while we're here let's give our all ' ' Release the dreams inside us ' ' And set them free ' ' Oh, while we're here let's leave a mark ' ' There's a candle in the dark ' ' It's here to guide us ' ' We may never love like this again ' ' But through the days ' ' Beyond the haze ' ' I see you reaching out ' Hi there. Marge, how's the family? They're just fine. Thank you for asking. Good. Gary. Yeah. Would you excuse us, gentlemen? Certainly. I've got a surprise for you. - Politicians don't like surprises. - We'll love again Carlos. Yes, sir. Oh. What can I fix you, Mr. Duncan? I want you to meet Senator Parker. Carlos, a great pleasure. Oh, it's a great honor, Senator. Now, show him what you've been hiding back

there. Yes, sir. Oh. Twenty-nine? That's all you're gonna drink tonight. A whole case? Well, what you don't drink, we'll ship the rest back to Washington. Open a bottle, will you? Yes, sir. Uh, how did you ever come by a whole case? Come on, Jim. Oh, it's nothing. Let me guess. You're looking for someone. I'm looking for someone. Have you seen him? I've ordered for Patty and me. What can I get you? Nothing right now. Thank you, Roger. Susan. Tell me. Uh, what does a girl do in San Francisco when her, uh, old man decides to leave for two years? Beats me, buddy. No... head-hunting? Well, I've had a little trouble making that work. Could we discuss that tomorrow at... at lunch? No. You must miss your villa. Well, yes and no. It, uh- It gets rather dull in the south of France. It really does. I mean, nothing but swimming... and yachting, partying and all that sort of thing. And believe it or not, they, uh... they fight over the few eligible bachelors. Even such old scraps as I. No false humility, please. Oh. Shall we? I, uh- I- I decided to come back to the reality of an Francisco, uh, to regain my perspective and my humility... a-and spend more time at the one thing in this world that I'm really good at: the stock market. Monte Carlo's losses, San Francisco's gains. Thank you. Do you, uh... Do you believe in destiny? I believe in all good things. There must be a reason for my coming back home. Meeting you. This can't be right. Hmm? It's too hot. We'd better leave it off. Utility. Wes. Doug. I'm up on 83 with Will. Listen. We got a little wiring problem. If we get an overload, it could be trouble. Shut down as many Zone 1 systems as you can. Afraid I can't do that, Mr. Roberts. We've got all the lights on for the dedication ceremony. All? You mean the whole building? Well, we're taking the overload just fine. Well, shut it down right away. But I can't do that without a direct okay from Mr. Duncan himself. I'll accept the responsibility for that. Just turn off the goddamn lights. What about the lights in the tower for the party? - I didn't say kill all the power. Just the overload. - Yes, sir, Mr. Roberts. We better get down to 81 and check the relay systems. Okay. They turned on everything in the whole building. There's something on 81. Bill, phone it in just in case our automatic lines to the fire department are out. I'll be in 81. Got it. Hey! Get those drapes! Smother him! Try to smother him! Pull it around over here! Pull it over him! Come on! Get some water on that fire! Turn it on! Will. Down. Down. Stay low. Call an ambulance for this man. Damn it, man! Get on the ball! Call an ambulance! I want everybody off this floor. Yes, sir. What about the fire department? They're on their way. Get that ambulance! Give me a hand. Let's get him in the elevator. All right. Try not to touch him. Try to get him by his belt. Hello. This is 81. We've had an accident up here. A man's been burned. Get an ambulance. Yes. Right away. Roberts, call Duncan in the tower. We've got a lot of people up there. What? Do it now! It's Mr. Roberts. Yeah. Doug. We were getting worried about you. Susan's here, Senator Parker, the mayor and his wife. Everybody wants to know why the world's greatest architect isn't

here. Never mind about that. Will Giddings has been pretty badly burned. Will Giddings burned? How? Listen. I've already got an ambulance coming, but you better think about getting those people upstairs down on the ground floor. What for? We got a fire here! Well, I think it's under control, but- Well, then, uh, why the urgency? Urgency? Hey, Dunc, if that fire was caused by fluky wiring in this building, we could get fires breaking out everywhere! Doug, I think you're overreacting. Now, I feel sorry for Will Giddings, but he'll be taken care of. But I am not going to concern myself with a fire in a storage room on 81... because it can't possibly affect us up here. Not in this building. Now, have someone call me when the fire department arrives. In the meantime, get in your dinner jacket and come up and join the party. Now, come on! What building's on the corner of Montgomery and- Oh, Jesus. The glass tower. What? The glass tower! I sure hope that fire's on the first floor. You ever fight one in a high-rise? Yeah. Is it as rough as I hear? Like bein' inside a chimney! People. Hell, they got here before we did. Don't anybody ever stay home anymore? Get some hands over here, and have 'em walk out there. Okay. Captain. You understand? I want you over that way. Mike, she's throwin' a lot of smoke. Eighty-first floor, right? Right. We've got lobby control. Second alarm is in. Set up a forward command. Got it. Chief, this is Roberts, the architect. What've we got here, Kappy? Fire started 81st floor. Storage room. This is a bad one. The smoke is so thick we can't tell how far it's spread. What about your exhaust system? Well, it should've reversed automatically. There must have been a motor burnout or somethin'. Sprinklers? They're not working on 81. Why not? I don't know. Jim. Yes, sir. All right. Give us a quick refresher on your standpipe systems. Well, we got outlets on every floor. Both three and one-and-a-half inch. G.P.M.? and, uh, 500 from there to the roof. All right. And you're sure these elevators are programmed for emergency service? These two are. What floor do you keep your plans on? Seventy-nine. My office. That's good. That's two floors below the fire. All right. That'll be our forward command. All right, men. Take up the equipment. Right. Let's go. Okay. Architects. Yeah. It's all our fault. Now, you know there's no sure way for us to fight a fire... in anything over the seventh floor, but you guys just keep buildin' em as high as you can. Hey. Are you here to take me on or the fire? Okay. Well, what about the 81st floor? You got everybody out of there? I want to see all your floor plans. Eighty-one through 85. Gotcha. This is what I'm worried about. All those beams and that glass. Chief. Yeah. doesn't look too good up there. How long before you can give me a complete list of your tenants? You don't have to worry about that. We're movin' 'em out right now. Not live-in. Business tenants. We kind of looked up there too. The majority of them haven't moved in yet, and those that have aren't working tonight. I want to know who they are, not where they are. Now what does that got to do with anything- who they are? Do you have any wool or silk

manufacturers? You see, in a fire, wool and silk give off cyanide gas. Do you have any, uh, sporting good manufacturers, like table tennis balls? They give off toxic gases. Want me to keep goin' down the line? No. One list of tenants comin' right up. Thank you. Over here and here. Here. What have we got? Well, elevator bank. Central core. Service elevators over here. Air-conditioning duct, six inches. Right. Pipe alleys here? One, two, three, four, five. This is south. South. Have you got any construction going up in 81? Nope. Anything that could blow up, like gasoline, kerosene, uh, fabric cleaner? I don't think so. Good. I'll be up on 81. Okay. For what it's worth, architect, this is one building that I figured wouldn't burn. Neither did I. And they're celebrating. A party. - Party? What party? Where? - In the Promenade Room. Why didn't you get 'em the hell out of there? Why don't you go on upstairs and talk to Duncan? He ain't exactly listening to me. I will. Oh. Here he is now. This is Duncan. A battalion chief? I'll watch out for him. Thank you. Ted, take your men down. Check that hallway. Take it down to the other crew. Jack. Jack. How bad? I don't like the looks of it. It's running the ceiling. Uh-huh. Work it around. Up there. I'll be up topside. Right. Jack, watch yourself. Keep it high. You looking for me, Chief? If you're Duncan, yeah. I am. Everything under control? We've gotta move all these people out of here. Oh, now just how bad is it? It's a fire, mister, and all fires are bad. Well, uh, I don't believe that you're familiar with... the many modern safety systems we have designed into this building. We've got 'em all. All right. It's your building, but it's our fire. Now let's get these people the hell out of here. I don't think you're listening, Chief. There's no way for a fire on 81 to reach up here. Not in this building. Okay. I'll do it. Hold it. Hold it. The mayor's out there. Do you want me to pull rank on you? When there's a fire, I outrank everybody here. Now, one thing we don't want is a panic. Now, I could tell 'em, but you ought to do it. Just make a nice cool announcement to all your guests... and tell 'em the party's being moved down below the fire floor... right now. Patty, you and Susan stay right here where I can find you. Now don't leave this table. You I want to talk to. Did you change any of Doug's electrical specifications? I most certainly did. For God sakes, why? The reason should be obvious. Especially to you. We've got a fire. And if it was caused by anything you did, I'm going to hang you out to dry, and then I'm going to hang you! Would you, uh, please stop playing? Stop playing, will you? Ladies and gentlemen. Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention? It seems that we have a small fire... in one of our storage rooms, Now, I assure you, there's no danger. But in accordance with the fire department's orders, a purely precautionary procedure, we're going to move the party down to the lobby for a while, and we'll be serving cocktails and champagne in our Continental Room. But I promise you. Dinner will not be delayed. Now, if we can all move to the elevators. Now, ladies and gentlemen, there's...

there's no reason to rush. Senator Parker, you and your party. It's really all right. Stay here. I'll be right back. Lisolette. Frank. Lisolette. How's it going, Chief? Better get ready. Kappy, pull out the floor plans on 82. We got problems. Fire lapping up? Yeah. Are your com lines all set up and tested? Phone jacks on every floor. I'm gonna plug into your P.A. system. No sweat. How about your emergency setup? Battery-powered standby system. Can you take these lines... and splice them into our two-way communications band? Sure. No problem? No problem. Okay. How long will this take? About a minute. Not bad. Here's our problem. Fire's lapping here. It's going up through the windows. Get down! Get down! Come on! The ceiling's going! They're trapped! We need help! Bring a line! Pull 'em out! Pull 'em out! Drop the fire line! Drop it low! Battalion 2 to forward command, urgent! Forward command. Go ahead. Explosion on 81. Fire heading toward elevator banks. We need more crews up here fast! All right. They need relief on 81. Hit it. They're on their way. Done. You better call Duncan, tell him to stop those people in the Tower Room... from using that express elevator, or somebody's gonna get killed. Okay, Kappy. Ring in a third alarm. I want some rescue squads here, and I also want choppers. We may need 'em if we're gonna get those people down. All right. Come on, fireman. I'll be on 81. Fine. The fire's moving toward the main shaft. Use the scenic elevator. Don't overload it. Okay, Doug. I don't like the way you talk to me. You drunk? Not yet. Well, then get out of my way. You didn't talk like this two years ago, did you? Running over budget and out of money. Did you ask me then how I could shave two million dollars of four electrical costs? Shut up, and help me with these people. And let me ask you, my dear father-in-law... Excuse me. Am I the only subcontractor you encouraged to cut corners? Excuse me. Where did you save the other four million in Doug's original budget? Everybody. Shh! Please. Please. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry. You'll have to move back into the Promenade Room, and we'll be taking you down by the scenic elevator. Now, these express elevators can be activated by fire, and with the probability of short circuits, the cars might stop on the floor where the fire is. So, please, we'll use the scenic elevators. Over there. For God sakes, get out of there! Please, back. Looks bad, Jack. Yeah, it is. I got a couple of men hurt. Fire's spreading down all corridors. All right. I got a third alarm in. Now, what about this ceiling? Must have just happened. I'll check the other corridors. All right. Fireman, let's pull it down before it falls down. Bring it out! Take it down. Empty all the water out! Fall back! Chief, it's out of control. We're losin' it! Bring in another line! Get another hose! Angela. Angela. Phillip. Phillip, open the door! Do you have any brilliant ideas I can use upstairs... to explain where I've been all this time? Mmm. Well, I think what you might do is just, uh, walk right up to him and say, uh, "J.D., I'm sorry for the delay, but my secretary had an urgent personal problem." What happens if he asks what the problem was?

Hmm. He won't. You know what astonishes me? What? You make love with a girl- Mm-hmm. and afterwards, there's no visible evidence. Nothing to mark the event. I mean, look at you. You look like you could be going to church. In this outfit? I love you. Did you leave a cigarette burning? That's not a cigarette. Jesus. Get some towels. Stuff them under the door. Dan. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Right. What did they say? Help's on the way. Oh. There's nothing to worry about. We'll just sit tight and wait till they get here. I won't panic. Not to worry, baby. Please, just join the end of the line. Oh, no, madam, please. You must... But I can't find my daughter. She's here somewhere. Oh. But they're aware of that. She's wearing a purple dress. I've got to find her. A purple dress. I promise you. They'll find her. Hurry up. Come on. Now, only 12 at a time. Hurry up. Come on. I'm sorry. That's it. Well, be in the next group. It won't be too long. What's she doin' on 87? Forward command? I wanna speak to Jernigan. Harry. Jernigan. What? Damn it, man. You should've sent a man up there. How do you expect her to hear a phone call? She's deaf. Sure the kids can hear. I don't know. Maybe they were in the shower or something when you called. Forward command. No. You stay where you are. I'll get 'em down. No. All my men are committed. I need fresh crews, damn it! Now! Okay, forward command. Fresh crews coming right up. Still got people on 87. I'll get 'em down. I'll give you a hand, Harry. Turn your face away. There never were any firemen, were there? I said that to make it easier on you. I switched off the phones. There's no way to call out. Nobody knows we're up here. Well, I always did want to die in bed. Nobody's going to die. For one thing, at least they'll never find out about us, will they? I used to run the 100 in 10 flat. Don't go. I'll be back with the whole fire department. On your mark. Dan! Down that corridor! You all right? They're in there. I know it. The mother and the two children. Don't worry. We'll get 'em out. Wait a minute. Please, Mrs. Mueller. Please stay back. What do you think? I don't know. Give it a kick. I'll take the back. I got Mrs. Allbright. Anybody in here? It's okay, kid. It's okay. Come on. He's okay. Mom. Mom. Your mom's all right. Mr. Jernigan took her downstairs. She'll be all right. Anybody else? My sis- My sister. Where's Angela? He'll get her. Angela? Angela? Angela? Angela. Angela, where are you? It's gonna be okay. It's okay. It's all right. Thank God. Angela. Come on. Just take it easy. Easy. Hold it right here. Hold it right here. Hold it here. All right! That's it. Don't press the plaza button. Everybody just calm down. At this rate it's gonna take a couple of hours to get everyone down. So I would suggest that those of us with stout hearts and trim waistlines... start using the stairs. That's 135 floors. Mm-hmm. All downhill. It's closer than they told us. Let's try the south exit. That might be clear. Carlos. Yes, sir. Help us try to get this thing open. It's stuck? Yeah. Here. Let me try to kick it. No. I'll call security. Yes, sir. On the double. Battalion 38, responding to fourth alarm. Reporting to forward command. Where are those choppers, Kappy?

Navy's been alerted. Why do they make these goddamn things so heavy? Hey. You want it easy, Chief? I don't see why they couldn't have designed a survival suit for us... like they did for football players. Who pays to see us play? Yeah. Yeah. Let's go to work. I need two men to go up the stairwell to the Tower Room. There's a door jammed. I want it cleared. Okay. You got it. Timmy, I want you with me. Get two men. Make sure they've got 30 minutes of air. Kappy. Yeah. Now there's gonna be glass sailin' all over this city. Call the police downstairs. Have them move those barricades four blocks back. Got it. Let's hit it. Right. Yo. Security guard! Anyone here? Hello. Security. Say, kitty. Almost missed ya, huh? Ow! Keep away from the walls. There's fire on the other side. Wait a minute. It's a ruptured gas line. Get back! Oh, my God! Can you get down? Is there any way you can get down? I think I can. Phillip. Let him try. There's no other way. Come on, Phillip. Come on. That part's easy. Come on, now. Easy does it. Get your foot over there. Ease down. Come on, Phillip. Come on, Phillip. Your foot's just a couple of inches away now. There you go. Easy now. Easy. Don't look down. That's right. Come on. I got ya. I got ya. We were supposed to have fire drills, but nobody ever told me anything. We were supposed to have fire drills. That's what they said. But they never did. It's going to be all right. It's going to be all right. It's going to be all right. You all right? You know, I had- I got up all right, but I think I'm gonna have a lot of trouble gettin' down. You think you could help me? Could you just hold on around my neck real tight? Oh, no. Come on. Give it a try. Just put your arms around me, and you tell me what to do. Okay? Put her legs down. Okay. Hold on tight. Put your legs around here. Hold on real tight now. Go on. Hang on. Just hold on tight, honey. Hold on. Hold on. You're okay. Hold on tight now. It's gonna be okay now. Hold on! Easy now. Hold on, Angela. I've got a hold of you. Get your arms around my neck. That-a-girl. Nurse. He stayed in too long. Bring him right over here. Mrs. Mueller, come on. You've gotta try! Take it slowly now. You've got about a foot to go. Feel around with your feet now. Can you see it? Hold onto that pole and grab a hold of my belt. Try to get your left hand over there. About half a foot. Six inches. Try to swing now. Just try to pendulum. Can you swing? Come on. Just get to me over here. Mrs. Mueller. Are you all right? Fine. All right, let's go. Come on. Come on. I'm comin'. I'm comin'. You okay? Nobody's gonna get down this way. Oh, God, we're cut off. Well, the only way is up. Come on. Let's go. Chief O'Hallorhan? O'Hallorhan. Inside, security phone on the right. Would you get me Chief O'Hallorhan right away? I'm trying to get through now. Can't we go down? No, the fire's below us. We have to go up. This'll put us right underneath the Promenade Room. Come on! Tim, get that phone. Check your ventilating systems over here. Jack? Yeah? I'll send up another truck company. Pull this ceiling and vent that other side. It's for you, Chief. The air control officer for the copter. Thank you. Jack, I know you've been hittin' it. I'm

gonna get some relief for you and your men. This is O'Hallorhan. Who am I speaking to? Chief Flaker, sir. U.S. Navy, Air Rescue. It's about time. We could use your rescue choppers. I'll order them right away. I'd like to set up communications... next to the forward command center. No, no, too dangerous. Stay outta those elevators. Well, then, sir, we'll just trot right up the stairs. Yeah, you'll just trot right up to 79, huh? Standing by in the lobby, sir. Thank you. This isn't gonna help any. They won't hear us in there. There's 300 people. It's a fire door. It's over two and a half inches thick. Maybe I could crawl through there. Will we- Will we be able to go with you? It leads to a pipe shaft that's 135 floors straight down. Use this. Phillip, you take care of these ladies. They're your responsibility now. All right. I'll tell him. Chief? Yeah. How does it look on 65? They're getting it contained. Well, it's still below us. Let's take a look. Okay, watch the electrics. Come here! The master generator's blown! But the backup should've kicked on by now. Go see what's holding up our starters. What happened? Where the hell are we? Security, this is Duncan. Have the main breakers gone? The whole system's failed. Well, what's the last report on the firemen getting here? Are they on their way? Hold onto me a second. Hold on! Jesus Christ, that's one of our men! Oh, God! Okay, okay. Go down by rope. Better get it. Sir? We're gonna rappel. Down to 65. Get on top of that elevator, use it for an exit. Why not pry open the doors at this level? I don't think so. I can't make it. I'll fall. I know I'll fall. Okay. Then you better go first. That way, when you fall, you won't take any of us with you. Let's go to work. Check all rooms in that corridor. Check this room! Tear it down. See? Just like we taught you in training. Okay, open it up. Of course I read you! Look, I don't know where the hell he is, but if I see him, I'll tell him! Must be an easier way to get to a fire. Not for us. Mike, where have you been? We had a little trouble getting here. The navy flight commander needs you down in the lobby right away. Sixty-five floors? Just walk right down? No, it's only five. They got a freight elevator on 60 on auxiliary power. Okay. You got this thing controlled? Well, we're gettin' there. All right, you men stay here with the chief. Tell him I'm on my way. Oh, Mike... This one of your men? "Dan Bigelow." Nope. Must be a civilian. Located O'Hallorhan. He's on his way. Look! There's another there. Look. It's too damn windy out there! Hey, Carlos, give me that security phone, will you? Mr. Roberts. How'd you get in here? I'll give it to you later. Give me O'Hallorhan. Well, that's okay. Anybody'll do. Listen. The south stairwell is blocked. Cement, for Chrissake! Can you send somebody up to break it loose? They're on their way? How... Okay. Oh. Oh, my Lord, Elke. My poor cat. She's still in the apartment. Oh, it's okay, Mrs. Mueller. I'm sure the fire didn't get up that high yet. She'll be all right. Oh, hello, ma'am. Oh, hello. How you doin'? We're fine. Glad to see you. Yeah. That's the door right here! It's blocked with cement. Okay. Ah, we're gonna have to blow that thing. Right.

Mrs. Mueller. It's Mr. Roberts. Mrs. Mueller! Phillip! We hear you! We're gonna blow this door! Get everybody clear. You've got about 30 seconds. Understood? Understood! Okay, ma'am, let's get down there outta the way. Okay. Everybody, could you please go back? They're gonna dynamite this door. Step back to the elevator. We're blowing up the exit door. Okay, get down low. What kind of explosives are you using? It's plastic, C-4. Blow a hole in anything. Here. Shine this on the bag for me. That's it. Keep it on there. Is there going to be a bang? Ah, nothin' for you to worry about, baby. You'll be safe. Okay, everybody ready? Good goin', guys. Hey. You all right? I'm James Duncan. Can we get down that way? No, not a chance, sir. The stairway below is completely gone. Everyone, listen! Hold it down! Listen! I've been informed by the fire department... that there's no possibility of using this stairway to get out. Now, I'm-I'm sorry. Patty. There's still a chance we can get out of here. Didn't you hear what my father said? We can't get out that way. Are you coming or not? No. If you have to wait for permission to save your own life, go ahead. I'm getting out. Roger. You... Ah! Come on! Come on! Let's go! You guys, pull the ceiling! You two, in there! I guess you thought I stood you up. It crossed my mind. You sure you're all right? Mm-hmm. Doug, those, uh... those helicopters, th-they'll get us out of here, won't they? Sure they will, if there's not too much wind. Some party. Doug- Hmm, da-dumm! Can I get you anything else? No? Damn! The choppers are here all right, but those high winds on the roof make a landing attempt too risky. Get some men on the roof of the Peerless Building. I wanna try to get a breeches buoy up to the Promenade Room. We can't shoot a line that distance, not in this wind. What's the matter with shootin' it from a chopper? I'll get right on it. Don? Chief, uh, the ceiling fell in on him. By the time I got to him, he was covered with hot stuff. Pretty ridiculous spectacle, right? There's no way down. Thank God you're all right. Oh, Roger, what are we gonna do? I know what I'm gonna do. Get quietly drunk. If you're responsible for all this, I know what you must be feeling. You don't know the meaning of the word. Responsible? Feeling! Oh, you know a lot about responsibility. It's a family trait. The Duncans are very big in the responsibility department, at least on the surface. That's not fair! I don't think it's wrong to feel a sense of-of duty! Sometimes... when you turn the exact same phrase, lift an eyebrow the exact same way, I see, and I hear your father. The two of you, one! Like a great big tree, and a little baby tree in its shade where the acorn fell. Roger, I came over here to you... because I-I-I-I thought you might need me! Right now, what I need most... is this. I, um- I promised myself that if I ever saw you again, I'd make a full confession. No, but thank you. But you don't know anything about me. But I do. You're penniless. You have no villa in the south of France- No antiques coming, no paintings. But, Harlee, I don't care. I'm a cheap tinhorn, a two-bit con man. Not cheap. Maybe unsuccessful. But don't you see? Your heart isn't in

it. How can you cheat people effectively if you don't really enjoy cheating them? I brought you up here tonight to sell you a thousand shares... in Greater Anaheim Power and Light. Is it a good investment? There is no Greater Anaheim Power and Light, only the certificate I had printed. I must say, I think you'd have admired the artwork. Beautiful engraving. I'd like to see it. It's in my jacket. I took the jacket off. I-It was needed elsewhere. You see what I mean? I can't even deliver a phony stock certificate. Did you hear what I said? Mm. Every word. Well, then, tell me you're shocked. Or at least disappointed! But I'm not. You must be! Harlee, I'm not. Okay. I'll be right back. Give me a few minutes with Doug, will you, dear? Sure. Will Giddings is dead. He died 20 minutes ago. Oh, boy. Oh, God, I wonder how many more'll be dead by tomorrow? I thought we were building something that- where people could work and live and be safe! If you had to cut costs, why didn't you cut floors instead of corners? Now, listen. Any decisions that were made for the use of alternate building materials... were made because I, as a builder, have a right to make those decisions- If I remain within the building code. And goddamn it, I did! Building code. Jesus. Oh, the building code. Come on, Dunc. I mean, that's a standard cop-out when you're in trouble. I was crawlin' around up there. I mean, duct holes weren't fire-stopped! Corridors without fire doors, and the sprinklers won't work. And an electrical system that's good for what? I mean, it's good for startin' fires! Hoo, boy. Where was I when all this was goin' on? 'Cause I'm just as guilty as you and that goddamn son-in-law of yours! What do they call it when you kill people? Come on! Move it! Okay. Who is it? Chief O'Hallorhan. What happened? Part of the central core just blew. Now, we've got in the fifth alarm. The helicopters? No, it's too windy. They can't set down. We want to set the breeches buoy up on the roof of the Peerless Building. Well, what can we do to help? Move all your combustible material away from the window. Okay. Gotcha. Come on. Grab those tables and chairs. Pile 'em up away from the walls! There's nobody on those drapes. Let's get on 'em now. Jake, give me a hand! Did you reach her? The phones are all out. Well, just a little while longer, and we'll all be home together. If only I could have talked to her. Let her know we were thinking of her. Told her how- how precious she is to us. She's still such a child. She doesn't even know where I keep the key to the safety-deposit box. How will she be able to get into it? I mean, uh, if she should have to. The things you think of. Do you wanna help me? Oh. Here he is. Chief, the wind velocity's down a little. We're gonna try for a landing. Gil, get Roberts. Yeah. Get 10 people up on the roof. Have the rest of 'em stand by in groups of 10. We're gonna start airlifting. Will do. Patty, put these over there where they can get them easily. Carlos, give me that pad of paper and a pencil. Yes, sir. Give me that brandy snifter too. Right. Doug, are they going to land? They're gonna try. Send the kids out first... and then the women. Number this up to- I don't

know... a hundred or so. High-rise roulette. High-rise roulette. That's right. Doug, there may not be time to tell you later. There will be. I'll go tell everybody. Pass those out when you're ready. All right, there's gonna be a lot of wind up there, especially when that chopper lands. So everybody stay in one group. Come on. Stay back! Stay back! Look out! I think so. Roberts! Mr. Roberts! Chief O'Hallorhan wants to speak to you. All right, make way. Pardon me. Comin' through! Comin' through! Pardon me. Here he is now. Yeah? Now look, Roberts, I know those pilots are dead and-God, it was just awful up there. Listen, our best chance now is the breeches buoy. I've told my two firemen up there to knock out a window. We're gonna try to shoot a line to you from a chopper. Okay. Hey, one of you guys got a pair of clippers? Uh, yeah, sure. What do you want 'em for? I wanna try somethin'. Step way back. The firemen are gonna knock out the windows. Step back. You won't get hurt. May I have your attention, please? We've activated a gravity brake on that outside elevator. There's no power to bring it back up, but at least we can get Which 12? The same group that was up on the roof. And two additions. The woman who saved the children's lives and a fireman. I want a trained man in there. All right, let's move it out! Marge! Here, take this. Take it. You can get out of here. Go on! Take it. What are you doing? I'm sorry. Listen. I want you out of here. So you can stop worrying about me? What about me down there worrying about you? It's the only way you can help me now, baby. Help me. If you ask me to go to the North Pole, or even the cliffs of Mendocino, I'd go. What if I ask you tomorrow? Please. Ma'am, I'll take her. Thank you. Come on, Phillip. All right. Hey. I'll never let you go anywhere without me again. I don't want to, ever again. I'll meet you in the lobby. I'll be waiting. Uh, we're still a lady short. You've gotta go. But I don't want to leave you. Honey, I'll make it. I promise you. Have I ever broken a promise to you? Good luck, honey. Please. All set, everyone? Okay, here we go. Hey, out of sight! It's coming! All right, let's untie this! Take it all! Pull in the rest of the line! All right, hold it. Hold it right there! Bring me in another 20 feet on that main line! Hey, come here! Tie this off, will you? All right. That's right. There you go! That's it. All right, bring in a little more. That's it. Hold it now! Brace yourselves. Watch your heads! Grab it! Grab it! Take it back and secure it! Okay! All right. Let it go! Let it go! All right. Go on! Take it all! Pull. Come on. Pull. Okay, take up on it! Make that line! Fast! How about the main line? Secured? Okay. Good! Chief! Jonathan. Explosion above 110. Blew the scenic elevator right off its track. It's hanging by a cable. How many people in it? Loaded. I'd say about 12. What are you gonna do? Flaker. - Flaker? - Sir? Can you give me a chopper with a winch and some cable? Have 'em pick me up on the roof of the Peerless Building. We got it. Yeah. Try and get a hitch on that elevator, drop it down to the deck by the chopper. Mommy, Mommy! It's all right. It's okay. I won't let anything happen. I promise. I won't cry if

you won't cry. Oh. It's all right. Yeah, take it up the ladder there. Okay, get it over. Come on. Come on. Get it up here. Okay! Okay, let it go! Look out below! Come on! Hey, make that chair fast! All right! Pull it right in there! Come on! Pull it in! All right! Let's haul that chair in! Come on! All of us! That's it! All right! Keep it goin'! All right! Hold it right there! - Who's next in order? - I am. I am! - Come ahead. - I can't do that. Yes, you can. I'll fall! I can't! I can't! Yes, you can. Yes, you can. Oh, God. Don't let go of me. Don't let go of me! Don't let me fall! Don't let go! Ah! Don't- Don't let go of me! Oh, oh! All right! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! God! Okay. Here she comes! All right! Pull that chair in! Easy! Easy! Hold it right there. Okay, lower the cable! Grab that hook! Steady it. Hook on the torch. Lash it tight. This is O'Hallorhan. We read you, Chief. I want you to pick me up with the hook and set me down on the scenic elevator. Then you're gonna pick up the scenic elevator... and very gently set it down on the street. Can you handle the weight? I think we can handle it. We'll find out in a hurry. Okay. Watch it. Okay, take it away! How much time do we have? Bob, I wish I knew. Goddamn it, Jim, you built the place! I just don't think that all of us are gonna make it. Well, I guess I'm next. Don't suppose you'll let me stay. Come on. I'll see you soon. I love you. Let it go! Think this'll hold it? It better. We're gonna have to cut the elevator cable. What's your number? Sixty-eight. Forty-seven. Oh! Oh! Oh, my God! Oh! Oh! Oh, no! That was close. Oh! Mrs. Ramsay, you'll be- you'll be all right now. Please. You'll be all right. Please, tell my husband I'll be all right. I will. You tell him I'll be all right. I-I... I will. I'll be able to see him at home later. I will. I will. I promise. Let's go. Here she is! She's all right! Watch the ladder! Let's go! Bring everything. We're gonna need it! Hey, Mike, deputy wants to see you. Okay. Yeah, Mike, look, we've been checking the situation up in the Promenade Room. And we figure they've got only about 17, maybe 18, minutes left, if that. It'll take more than three hours to get 'em all down by breeches buoy. Those people are gonna die up there if something's not done. Now, we might just have the answer. Mr. Johnson's a structural engineer. You tell the chief your calculations. The structural strength of the joists and risers up there in the Promenade Room, in my opinion, could definitely withstand the explosion. What explosion? Chief, we've got the copter ready out on the plaza. Fireman, wait a minute. Look, we'll handle that. Just get back to your job. Yes, sir. What explosion? We can blow the tanks two floors above the Promenade Room. They hold a million gallons of water. That's more than enough to drown the fire. - You're crazy. - Mike, it's the only way. Well, how do you know it'll work? You could kill everybody up there. I don't think so. You don't think. When you take into account... the stress and load factors, the building design- Wait a minute. Hold it. Mike, look, we've already made the decision. Now, someone has got to go up there, rig the charges and blow 'em. Now, there's only two people

in the department qualified for that. That's you and Connors. They just... They just brought Connors down. He's on his way to the burn center. Look, under the circumstances, we can't order you to go up there. I'm just layin' it out for you. But you... You see how it is, don't you? How do I get back down? Oh, shit! Huh. The women are gone. We are going next. You've all got numbers, and you're gonna take your turn! And if it's any consolation, I'm going to be the last one outta here along with my son-in-law. Roberts. It's outta control. And it's comin' your way. You got about 15 minutes. They wanna try somethin'. They wanna blow those water tanks two floors above you. They think it might kill the fire. How they gonna get the explosives up here? Oh, they'll find some dumb son of a bitch to bring it up. Hang on, I'll tell 'em. They wanna try to put out the fire by blowing up the water tanks above us. It's gonna mean a lot of water and steel and concrete, but if they don't try it... we're all gonna burn. The fire's out of control below us. They figure we got maybe 15 minutes. This way some of us might survive. We got no options. Come on. Let's go. Get that line! - Get off! - You crazy bastard! Get off this line! Let go of me! It's not gonna work! Oh! It won't hold everybody! You! Get off! Get outta there! Get the hell outta there! No! No! No! Get off! Chief. Yeah. Well, we just lost the breeches buoy. There was panic up here. It's under control now. Okay. I'm gonna try to set down on the roof. I'm gonna need you up there. Well, I know where to place the charges, but I don't know how. I know how. Okay. See you up there. All right! You're gonna have to tie yourselves down. Ropes, tablecloths, belts, anything you can find. Carlos, get some knives. For God's sakes, Carlos, don't tie yourself up to a lot of glass! That's the '29! Comin' through. Comin' through. Come on. Try it. It's okay. Doug, I... never thought that a thing like this could happen. Sure. Hey, how much time you think we got? Ten minutes, maybe less. We're gonna have to blow the floors out as well as the tanks, you know. All right, this is your detonator. You're running instantaneous. I'm running delayed. Here you go. This is your explosive. This is the timer. Now later on, after you throw the wire, we'll plug it and splice it into the timer, set it, and then it blows. You set your explosive... like this. Take your detonator, pull the plug. Toss it. Got it? I got it. Good luck. See you later. Okay, thanks. Here you go. How much you gonna set it for? Five. I think we can make that. That's it. Tie yourselves down, goddamn it! You'll never make it through there. How much time? Three and a half. Air. Here. I'm burning up! Let's go. Fireman. Bob! Bob! Oh, my God! Excuse me. She was in the elevator with you. The fine-looking lady. Mrs. Mueller. Have you seen her? I'm sorry. She's dead. Lisa! Lisa! Lisa! Claiborne! What? I didn't want you to see him. You know there's nothing that any of us can do to bring back the dead. All I can do now is pray to God that... I can stop this from ever happening again. I don't know. Maybe they just ought to leave it the way it is. A kind of shrine to all the bullshit in the world. You know, we were lucky

tonight. Body count's less than 200. You know, one of these days, they're gonna kill 10,000 in one of these firetraps. And I'm gonna keep eatin' smoke and bringin' out bodies... until somebody asks us how to build 'em. Okay. I'm askin'. You know where to reach me. So long, architect.